

Frequently Asked Questions



What is ENERGY STAR?

A government backed label for Energy efficiency. There are over 60 products that can earn this label (light bulbs, dishwashers, refrigerators, computer monitors, etc). One of the products is also a home. All ENERGY STAR products consume less ENERGY than standard products so they save you money.

What are ENERGY STAR qualified new homes?

Homes that are at least 15% more energy efficient than required by the 2004 International Residential Code (IRC). Inverness Homes are up to 30% more efficient than the 2004 IRC. Our homes are technically superior to code built homes (ie it requires much greater attention to detail when building to earn this label). With energy costs and environmental concerns on the rise ENERGY STAR New Homes make sense everywhere.....but only the Best Builders can achieve this rating.

Are all energy efficient homes ENERGY STAR homes?

No. A home can be very energy-efficient, but unless it is independently tested by a qualified third party it is not an ENERGY STAR labeled home. Look for the ENERGY STAR label on the electrical box of your home. If it is not there you do not have a ENERGY STAR home.

How does a home acquire the ENERGY STAR label?

It is a 3 step process:

1. Preconstruction-We send each home design to an independent third party. They create a computer model that estimates the energy consumption of the home.
2. Construction-Prior to drywall installation the third party comes out and inspects everything behind the walls. They use an EPA designed "Thermal Bypass Check list ". Any findings are noted and corrected prior to drywall being installed.
3. Post Construction-The third party tests the ductwork for leakage and also tests the building for leakage. Any findings are noted and corrected. Only then is a ENERGY STAR Label generated. Note: The third party is also audited to ensure compliance with the EPA's rigorous ENERGY STAR New Home Standards.

What are the benefits of purchasing an ENERGY STAR Home?

1. Better Performance
2. Lower Cost of Ownership
3. A Smart Investment
4. Protection for the Environment
5. Peace of Mind

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Who is likely to be interested in an ENERGY STAR labeled home?

While every customer is interested in saving money and having a more comfortable home, certain messages resound with certain audiences.

1. First Time Buyers are frequently concerned with the major costs they are about to incur and may feel better knowing that their home will have lower operating costs vs other homes on the market.
2. The young professional-Aware of climate change and the potential role that they are playing. Buying a efficient home not only saves money it reduces greenhouse gas emissions vs a std home.
3. Family buyers tend to have high energy bills and should respond well here. Also, parents tend to think about the world they are leaving to their children and may respond well to environmental benefits.
4. Retired buyers are sometimes on limited budgets and can be responsive to cost issues. More than that, temperature and comfort is often a high priority for these clients

When did ENERGY STAR start certifying homes?

Mid 1990s.

How many ENERGY STAR homes are in the US?

Less than 12% of the new homes being built earn this label.

Why are there so few ENERGY Star homes?

ENERGY STAR typically flourished in areas of the country where local utilities or government embraced it or in areas where the climate is extreme. Locally many Builders have tried to reach for the ENERGY STAR but have not been able to do so....especially since the ENERGY STAR introduced a tough new standard on 1/1/07.

What is the difference between a Green (ie LEED home) and an ENERGY STAR Home?

A LEED Home looks both inside and outside of the home. For example, it looks at the recycled material content of the home, landscaping drought resistance, driving distance from shopping, schools, etc. An ENERGY STAR Home focuses on comfort, indoor air quality and the utility bills but does not look at the recycled content or the location/grounds. One major difference between the two programs is that an ENERGY STAR home pays you back in monthly utility bill savings. A LEED home will not save you money because its construction costs are greater than the total utility bill savings. Over time a LEED home will cost about the same to own as a code built home....but is much better for the environment as it used recycled materials, etc.

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What is a Blower Door Test?

The blower door test is an air leakage test for your home. It measures how leaky or tight the home is. This is important because air leakage is typically the #1 reason your furnace kicks on in the winter. Minimizing air leakage is critical to lowering heating costs which can account for 40-50% of a utility bill in a typical home.

Explain the Blower Door Test.

A calibrated instrument with a fan on it is attached to the front door of the home. Air is sucked out of the house until we reach a pressure that is equivalent to having a 20 mile per hour wind blowing on all 4 walls and the roof at one time. This causes the house to leak excessively. An airflow number is captured at the test pressure. This number is then normalized for everyday conditions in the computer program for

I have heard some homes are too tight. Is that true of ENERGY STAR homes?

No. Inverness's ENERGY STAR Homes are tested for air tightness and are ventilated to help maintain indoor air quality. In fact we perform fresh air calculations for 100% of our homes and provide fresh air for 100% of our homes. This additional investment in equipment and attention in detail is something that you will not find in a standard home.

How is fresh air provided?

We use Whisper Green Panasonic Bath fans (hall bath only). These are special bathroom fans designed to provide your home with continuous fresh air. They remove stale air from the home. Fresh air is then introduced from the outside. These fans consume little electricity when they are running (approx 12 watts).

How do you test for duct leakage?

This test is very similar to blower door test. We measure the leakage to the outside of the home. This ensures you are not wasting energy heating or cooling energy in the walls or thru the attic. This is a super critical test. Thought: Would you fill up your cars gas tank up if 3 out of 10 gallons of gas leaked out of tank? Of course not. You should expect great performance from your homes ductwork system. On a untested code built home you could have paid extra to upgrade the heating and cooling equipment but a large portion of the upgrade would not be realized because of leaky ductwork (national average is 20-30% of air is leaked to outside). The bottom line is you must look at the heating and cooling equipment and the duct work as a system. If you just look at the equipment you will not have a complete picture.